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## Book Review: Looking for Leads: Shipwrecks of the Past Revealed by Contemporary Documents and the Archaeological Record by Christian Ahlstrom

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The author currently teaches archaeology courses at the University of Buffalo, as well as acting as a consultant in historical archaeology for Hartgen Archaeological Associates, Inc. Her teaching interests include economic adaptation and acculturation, specifically regarding wampum and its role in the colonial economy of the Northeast.

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**LOOKING FOR LEADS: SHIPWRECKS OF THE PAST REVEALED BY CONTEMPORARY DOCUMENTS AND THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL RECORD**, by Christian Ahlström 1997, The Finnish Academy of Science and Letters, Helsinki. 238 pages, 57 figures, 16 tables, 1 appendix, no price given.

Reviewed by Stefan H. Claesson

Seafaring, perhaps the "most international of all man's innumerable industries" (p. 211), has been well documented in the post-

medieval period of Northern Europe, as pointed out by Christian Ahlström, author of *Looking for Leads*. Published by the Finnish Academy of Science and Letters, *Looking for Leads* is exactly that, a presentation of methods for analyzing written sources in identifying shipwrecks and the contributions of archaeological finds and historical documents to interpreting the past from a marine context. Ahlström's research focuses specifically on the post-medieval period in the Baltic Sea and presents a series of case studies that illustrate how maritime archaeology and history offer insights into our understanding of past political, economic, and societal patterns. Though Ahlström repeatedly insists that the methodological approaches proposed in this book should be used only "to chart and identify wrecks in specific geographical sectors of the Baltic" (p. 212), the interpretive approaches he posits can certainly also be applied to other geographical regions with extensive written archives.

At first glance, one may be distracted by typographical errors on the book's cover and the erratic flow of text that is probably limited by the translation to English. The clear and concise presentation of methodological approaches for the interpretation of maritime resources and contributions of maritime resources to history, however, is refreshing. Few publications have tackled theoretical issues within maritime archaeology or presented a "how to" approach toward identifying and interpreting shipwrecks and written sources. Beginning with basic definitions of history and archaeology, Ahlström highlights the importance of historical studies in providing overall views of the past, but also notes that history lacks the nuances and grassroots that are provided by archaeology. Through the presentation of problems of interpretation of material evidence, the scope and limits of documentary marine archaeology, and a number of theoretical perspectives, the reader is easily able to grasp the theoretical concepts and methodological approaches behind the presentation of the case studies of numerous Scandinavian shipwrecks (the flute ship *Anna Maria*, the naval frigate *Birger Jarl*, the Älvsnabben Finds, the wrecks at Jussarö and Borstö, Finland, and the schooner *Fäderneslandet*).

This book is well suited for the archaeologist who lacks a historical perspective, the historian who lacks an archaeological background, and the terrestrial archaeologist who needs an introduction to maritime archaeology. A reasonable quantity of illustrations and tables are scattered throughout the text, particularly in relation to the case studies. There is a liberal bibliography and the text is well referenced for those interested in pursuing maritime research in the Baltic Sea. In addition, appendices provide the location of National Archives and important maritime documents in northern European countries, as well as seafaring regulations and historical decrees that help provide a contextual background for studying maritime cultural resources of the Baltic.

For maritime archaeologists who have not been exposed at any great length to methodological and theoretical concepts, *Looking for Leads* provides a basic introduction to these areas while emphasizing their importance in studying the past.

Stefan Claesson is a graduate of the Nautical Archaeology Program at Texas A&M University, and is currently the President of the Institute of Maritime History.

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